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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BRIEFS MOD ON SECURITY ISSUES

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (S/NF) Ambassador, RAO and the Office of Defense Representative July 9 briefed Defense Minister Mukhtar on U.S. intelligence cooperation, military cross border operations and U.S.-Pakistan security assistance. Mukhtar noted that press reports about impending unilateral military action, civilian casualities caused by strikes, and the death June 10 of 11 Pakistani military personnel increased pressure on the GOP to distance itself from the U.S. and "sets us back in a common struggle" to provide training for the Frontier Corps. Defense Secretary Rasool noted that the MOD had to catch the Prime Minister at the airport to obtain approval to release $140 million for the June 15 F-16 payment; it would be "very hard" to also make the $61 million overdue payment for the mid-life upgrade. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Ambassador, accompanied by RAO Archibald, Office of Defense Representative (ODRP) MG Helmly and Polcouns (notetaker) met July 9 with Defense Minister Ahmed Mukhtar, Defense Secretary Rasool, and Rear Admiral Tanveer Faz. This was one of a series of briefings the Embassy is providing on security/defense issues for Pakistan's new civilian leadership. We have provided the same briefing to PM Gilani, Pakistan People's Party leader Asif Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Nawaz Sharif and several ministers.

Intelligence Brief

¶3. (S/NF) Archibald provided Mukhtar with a briefing on al Qaeda activities in Pakistan and the threat that al Qaeda and Taliban activities in Pakistan pose for both the U.S. and Pakistan itself. He reviewed al Qaeda training techniques and organizational structure and the history of plots emanating from Pakistan against western targets over the past seven years. He explained how militants had exploited the hiatus and safe haven provided by peace negotiations to regroup their forces and detailed the increasing ties among foreign fighters, local Taliban sympathizers and the Afghan Taliban network.

¶4. (S/NF) Explaining that al Qaeda was copying classic Maoist insurgency strategy, Archibald noted that Pakistan was between the subversion stage (talibanization and intimidation through attacks on girls' schools, barber shops, CD shops, etc) into the guerrilla warfare stage (attacks on security forces and police; increased coordination between criminal warlords like Mangal Bagh and militants like Baitullah Mehsud). Unless Pakistan could contain this trend, cautioned Archibald, they would soon be facing the final stage of insurgency, large-scale military operations against the militants.

¶5. (S/NF) Mukhtar expressed appreciation for the briefing and asked that the U.S. understand the difficulty of his position. Constant media reports suggesting the U.S. plans to launch unilateral military operations and the June 10 incident where a U.S. strike killed 11 Pakistani security

forces, according to Mukhtar, was putting pressure on the government to distance itself from the U.S. This is complicated by the confusion over the U.S. rules of engagement in Pakistan, said Mukhtar.

¶6. (S/NF) Ambassador responded that we understood Mukhtar's difficulties, but that border incidents had increased 40% over last year and this was increasing pressure on Washington as well. In response to Rasool's question, Ambassador stressed that many media reports of U.S. strikes were factually inaccurate; in one case recently, an explosion of arms at a militant camp was wrongly interpreted as being the result of a U.S. strike. Helmly clarified that U.S. military aircraft transiting Pakistani airspace en route to Afghanistan were not used in strikes against Pakistan.

Cross-Border Operations

¶7. (S/NF) MG Helmly explained the complex, unpredictable reality of night-time combat in the mountainous area of the Pakistan-Afghan border. The majority of ground engagements occurred between 8 pm and 6 am, often in bad weather; coordination was based on verbal (usually radio) exchanges using maps with different Pakistani and Afghan names for the same geographical areas across an unrecognized border line. Helmly noted that problems with ground coordination were compounded by a high level of distrust and miscommunication between poorly trained Pakistani Frontier Corps and Afghan Border Police. This murky situation, suggested Helmly, invites fratricide like that which occurred on June 10. Helmly noted that the combined investigation of the June 10 incident was ongoing and said we hoped the report would include recommendations on how to reduce the possibility of further such incidents. The incident was demonstrable evidence that we needed to begin tripartite operation of the Border Coordination Centers as soon as possible.

¶8. (S/NF) Helmly outlined the three rules of engagement governing use of force by the U.S.: (1) if a U.S. commander has intelligence about an imminent threat from a site within 10 km inside Pakistan, he may take action against that site; (2) if ground or aerial forces are in hot pursuit of a target, they can follow and strike 10 km inside Pakistan; and (3) if U.S. troops are being fired upon by a site 10 km within Pakistan, we can return fire.

¶9. (S/NF) Mukhtar said that the Pakistani perception of the June 10 incident was that the U.S. strike was deliberate, not accidental or the result of confusion. He noted the ongoing communication during the day between Pakistani and U.S. forces that demonstrated who was where. Mukhtar lamented that the incident "sets us back in a common struggle" against military forces because both the public and the Pakistani military were deeply upset over the incident. Civilian causalities, he insisted, were inevitable in all scenarios.

¶10. (S/NF) Helmly noted that the uptick in border engagements was due to three factors: (1) the annual spring/summer fighting season; (2) a "thickened battle space" as a result of having more U.S./ISAF forces on the ground, especially in Kandahar, Helmond and Konain; and (3) a lack of pressure from the east, which had allowed the militants to focus more intently on coalition forces. Helmly also stated that the militants were changing tactics--using more suicide bombings and IEDs against government targets in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The intensity and increasing sophistication of a growing level of close border engagements, said Helmly, reinforced the importance of Pak/Afghan/U.S. coordination, especially in the Border Coordination Centers.

Security Assistance

¶11. (C) Helmly provided Mukhtar with a power point briefing outlining U.S. security cooperation programs with Pakistan, highlighting both the F-16 program and the train and equip program for Pakistan's special forces (SSG) and the Frontier Corps. Noting that President Bush's commitment for $300

million per year in FMF expired in 2009, Helmly urged that we coordinate closely with Pakistan's Joint Staff to craft future FMF proposals that met the expectations of the U.S. Congress. He reported that the administration was working with the Congress to gain approval for Pakistan's request to use FMF for the F-16 mid-life upgrade program. However, he cautioned this would take some time and urged Pakistan to make the $61 million late payment for the mid-life upgrade.

¶12. (C) Rasool responded that this was "an immense problem for us." To obtain approval to use national funds to make the $140 million F-16 payment that was due on June 15, the Air Chief Marshall and MinDef had to appeal to PM Gilani. "We had to catch him at the airport" to convince him to tell the Finance Minister to release the funds said Rasool. "It will be very hard to meet the July 31 date for payment of the $61 million."

PATTERSON